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NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychoanalysis

Proposed Course Syllabus for Spring 2020

Course Title:

**Interpersonal Psychoanalytic Work in Racial and Other Diversities:
Aspiring Towards Radical Openness**

Instructor: Anton Hart, PhD

Overview:

In contrast with a multicultural competency perspective, this course aims to address issues of racial, ethnic, and other diversities in the psychoanalytic situation, approaching them from an Interpersonal perspective which emphasizes the analyst's curiosity, receptive listening, participant-observation, and self-reflectiveness (and the cultivation of these qualities in the analysand). We will examine the central roles of inquiry and openness, and also their obstacles, in considering how emergent differences between self and other may be psychoanalytically explored, engaged and, sometimes, transcended. The instructor's concept of Radical Openness, a hermeneutically derived orientation to the clinical psychoanalytic process, involving unusual forms of receptivity to the analysand's experience of the analyst, will provide a foundational conceptual framework. Those communications from the analysand—the other—that the analyst experiences as most foreign are seen as being personally relevant to, and potentially transformative for, the analyst. Interpersonal theory allows

considerable openness to various implementations of the analyst's flexible and resourceful psychoanalytic participation since it conceives of transference as not simply distortion but as the patient's unique perspective on who the therapist is and what the therapist does. The essence of IP as I see it, is that one cannot NOT participate; psychoanalysis is, ultimately, co-participatory self-analysis. Accordingly, the analyst rejects the privileged position of the "expert." That means the analyst's participation must involve attending to all prejudices and presumptions about the Other as they are expressed and enacted in the field. This is universal, pertaining to both analysts of color and white analysts as well.

Questions to be considered in this course include:

What are the therapist's anxieties that a competency orientation seeks to manage, and what might the hidden liabilities of valuing the mastery of contents over attention to process be?

What are the different *diversities* and how might they be prioritized relative to each other in the psychoanalytic situation?

How can we reconcile a stance of neutrality and the imperative of bringing issues of race and other forms of diversity into the foreground in the treatment process in as much as they are, arguably, always present, even if unspoken?

Are issues of race and other forms of diversity *always* present, even when the psychoanalytic dyad is racially homogeneous?

Is psychoanalysis usefully understood as a "white" discipline, the psychoanalytic consulting room, the psychoanalytic classroom, and the supervisory meeting room "white spaces"?

Are there inherently racist, classist, hetero-centric or patriarchal aspects of psychoanalytic theory, psychoanalytic pedagogy, psychoanalytic institutes, and psychoanalytic membership organizations?

What did H.S. Sullivan say about difference?

How might the concept of participant/observer poise one to engage in issues of diversity?

What are the implications of these questions for how we proceed?

Meeting Time: 12.5 hours as a one credit course
TBD, 2 hours, 5 minutes per class

Dates:

Six sessions, TBD

Session 1: Diversities

Course Introduction: This session will introduce the concept of “the diversities”—rather than one diversity—and address pedagogical questions on approaching this subject. We will also explore participants’ particular interests and apprehensions at this starting juncture.

Required Reading:

Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The Interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: W. W. Norton. (Chapter 3, “Postulates”)

Hart, A. H. (2020). Principles for teaching diversity and otherness from a psychoanalytic perspective. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 56(2-3), 404-417.

Suggested Readings:

Hart, A. H. (2017). Diversifying psychoanalysis: Reasons and resistances. Chapter in, *Unknowable, unspeakable and unsprung: Navigating the thrill and danger of living amidst truth, fantasy and privacy*. Jean Petrucelli and Sarah Schoen, Eds. London: Routledge

Reichbart, R., Hart, A. H. & Moskowitz, M. (2014). (Film) “Black Psychoanalysts Speak,” Delaware: Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing (PEP). Accessible at the following URL:
<http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=pepgrantvs.001.0001a>

Learning objectives:

- 1) Identify professionals’ reasons for and resistances to addressing issues of racial and other diversities in our psychoanalytic work.
- 2) Develop an understanding of the personal and structural anxieties associated with engaging issues of diversity, difference and otherness.

Session 2: Prejudice, Discrimination & Othering

In this session, drawing on the seminal psychoanalytic contributions of Bion and Levenson, we will look at the central problems of mindedness and curiosity, as we attempt to formulate a conceptual foundation for prejudice, discrimination, and othering.

Required Readings:

Bion, W. R. (1959). (1959). Attacks on linking. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 40, 308-315.

Levenson, E. A. (1988). The pursuit of the particular: On the psychoanalytic inquiry. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 24, 1-16

Suggested reading:

Bion, W. R. (1967), Notes on memory and desire. In: *Classics in Psychoanalytic Technique*, ed. R. Langs. Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1981, pp. 259-260.

Learning objectives:

- 1) Recognize the central roles of curiosity and openness as antidotes to cultural ignorance and insensitivity.
- 2) Identify the theoretical lines that support the analyst's attempt to cultivate qualities of curiosity and openness in themselves and in their patients.

Session 3: Race and Racism

In this session we will look at contemporary attempts to look into matters of race and racism, with a particular focus on African American experience. We will have an in-class screening of archival video footage of Drs. Ralph Greenson and Ellis Toney discussing their inter-racial analysis.

Required Readings:

Holmes, D. E. (2017). The Fierce Urgency of Now: An appeal to organized psychoanalysis to take a strong stand on race. *The American Psychoanalyst*, 51(1), 1-9.

Stoute, B. J. (2017). Race and racism in psychoanalytic thought: The ghosts in our nursery. *The American Psychoanalyst*, 51(1), 10-29.

Hart, A. (2017). From multicultural competence to radical openness: A psychoanalytic engagement of otherness. *The American Psychoanalyst*, 51(1), 12-27.

Suggested Reading:

Greenson, R. E. Toney, P. Lim, and A. Romero (1982). Chapter 11. Transference and Countertransference in Interracial Psychotherapy, In Bass, B., G. Wyatt, and G. Powell, Eds. *The Afro-American Family; Assessment, Treatment and Research Issues*. Grune & Stratton: New York, pp. 183-201.

Learning objectives:

- 1) List at least four features of African Americans' experience of structural racial oppression in the psychoanalytic field.
- 2) Identify the relevance of thinking about and addressing issues of racial oppression in the clinical psychoanalytic process as an integral matter rather than as an "add-on".

Session 4: Techniques

In this session we will consider techniques, pitfalls, and controversies that may be taken into consideration for the psychoanalytic engagement of issues of prejudice, discrimination and otherness: hermeneutics and Field Theory and their implications for engaging racism and otherness.

Required Readings:

Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). Truth and method (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1975). Pp. 235-267.

Davison, A. (2015). The APSA's *DA-RT Statement*, Hermeneutics, and the Question of Transparency. *QMMR*, the newsletter of the American Political Science Association's Organized Section for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research.

Suggested Reading:

Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). Truth and method (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1975). Pp. 299-333.

Rosengart, D. (2020). On “Whitening Programs” and multicultural collusions. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 56(4). 491-507.

Learning objectives:

- 1) Distinguish between radical openness and self-disclosure.
- 2) Recognize pitfalls and breakdowns that can occur in diversity-related explorations and find ways to use these in the service of the restoration of open dialogue.

Session 5: Whiteness/PSA/Interpersonal Tradition

This session looks at the experience of racism, and considers matters of whiteness and privilege.

Required Readings:

Hart, A. (2019): The Discriminatory Gesture: A Psychoanalytic Consideration of Posttraumatic Reactions to Incidents of Racial Discrimination, *Psychoanalytic Social Work*.

White, K. P. (2002). Surviving hating and being hated: Some personal thoughts about racism from a psychoanalytic perspective. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 38, 401-422.

Suggested Readings:

Suchet, M. (2007). Unraveling Whiteness. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 17:867-886.

Gump, J. (2011). Reality matters: The shadow of trauma on African-American subjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 27 (1), 42-54.

Learning objectives:

- 1) Describe the concept of the “discriminatory gesture” and describe three of its mechanisms of impact.

2) List four aspect of racial hatred, two regarding the experience of hating, two regarding the experience of being hated.

Session 6: Diversity in Sexualities

In this final meeting we will consider diversity in the sexual realm, followed by an exploration of the subversive and emancipatory dimensions of the psychoanalytic process. We will wrap up by considering what we have covered and what has been left out.

Required Readings:

Blechner, M. J. (2009). *Sex changes: Transformations in society and psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge. (Chapter 13)

Easton, D. & Hardy, J. W. (2009). *The ethical slut: A practical guide to polyamory, open relationships & other adventures*. Berkeley: Celestial Arts. (Chapters 2-3)

Suggested Readings:

Hymer, S. (2005). Subversive redemption in psychoanalysis. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 65:207-217.

Baldwin, J. (1962). Letter from a region in my mind. *The New Yorker*, November 17th.

Learning objectives:

- 1) Contextualize the category of sexual diversity through the identification of three questionable presumptions that psychoanalytic theory has made about sexual orientation
- 2) Describe two conservative and two subversive aspects of the psychoanalytic approach to theory and practice.